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New questionnaire for juveniles

Authorized by JJA Commissioner

Commissioner Albert Murray of the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority authorized the use of the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (second version) (MAYSI-2) as an option for all Juvenile Intake and Assessment Service Centers in Kansas this week. Juvenile Intake and Assessment Service Centers serve nearly 33,000 youth in crises each year, including runaways, suspected children in need of care and suspected juvenile offenders who are brought into the centers, in most cases, by law enforcement.

“The purpose of Juvenile Intake and Assessment is to intervene with youth in crisis, get them to a safe place, and try to find out some of the root causes of their problem and what services we have in our communities that could help them,” said Commissioner Murray. “This new screening instrument will be used by Intake directors to help gather information about each youth and their needs.

A task force of intake directors recommended the MAYSI-2 across the state, which convened in October. The task force was charged with making recommendations as to the further use of a 139-questionnaire called the Problem Oriented Screening Instrument for Teenagers (POSIT), used in Kansas since the inception of the Juvenile Intake and Assessment system in 1995. The Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority, which began operating in 1997, has used the POSIT instrument exclusively, since assuming responsibility for Juvenile Intake and Assessment from the Office of Judicial Administration in July 1997.

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MAYSI-2

Add one

The MAYSI-2 will be optional for Juvenile Intake and Assessment directors, who may choose to use it rather than the POSIT. It is a 52-item, true/false questionnaire, administered with pencil and paper to youth between the ages of 12-17. It takes less than 10 minutes to administer. According to the Commissioner's task force, as of December 2000, more than 200 justice facilities and programs in 30 states and 16 major cities were registered for use of the MAYSI-2.

Juvenile Intake and Assessment directors may still choose to use the POSIT. A recent opinion from Attorney General Carla Stovall endorses its continued use as a screening instrument and the juvenile intake and assessment process, as long as the process is carried out according to statute.

"The Juvenile Justice Authority continues to stand firmly behind the use of the POSIT," said Commissioner Murray. "However, in keeping with the spirit of the Reform Act, which emphasizes local decision making, intake directors will now have a choice of using the POSIT or the MAYSI-2. Serving the best interest of the troubled youth who come into the Intake Centers is our concern."